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Medieval and Early Modern Performance in the Eastern Mediterranean

Edited by
Arzu Öztürkmen and Evelyn Birge Vitz

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Volume 20

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This volume is dedicated to the memory of Metin And,
a great scholar of performance studies
and a man of warm humour and deep curiosity.

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Introduction

On the large eastern edge of the Mediterranean, the period from the start of the Crusades through the Ottoman era knew — and brought into mutual contact — a truly remarkable array of performances and performers, of a multitude of types. But of course examination of performance in the Eastern Mediterranean during the medieval and early modern era requires some careful conceptualization: of 'performance' and 'performer'; of 'the Mediterranean' as well — this region also often being termed the 'Muslim world', the 'Middle East', or the 'Ottoman domain'. This book represents a preliminary attempt to lay out and analyse a broad set of performance genres in this particular geographical setting. Our focus is on regional dynamics, and also on the intertextualities between the many different cultural forms that developed and travelled in complex patterns, and which survive in manuscripts, in remembrances, and in rituals of today.

The volume thus proposes to display something of a cross-cut of this rich cultural repertoire, presenting case studies of singers, dancers, storytellers, street performers, clowns, preachers, shadow puppeteers, and semi-theatrical performances in many folk and other celebrations. This book also attempts to assess critically the historiographic approach that thus far has paid relatively little attention to the dialogic relationships between cultural forms across the Mediterranean, following, rather, more-or-less conservative categorization regarding both regional and disciplinary boundaries. We propose to view the Eastern Mediterranean not simply as the Middle East, or the Ottoman or Muslim Mediterranean, but as a geographical-cultural domain in which the various parts have been, over the centuries, very much in contact. The volume will also, we hope, contribute to the recent debates concerning the North-South and East-West axes within the Mediterranean world. (The fall, or conquest, of both Granada and Constantinople recontextualized the socio-political and cultural significance assigned to particular regions of the Mediterranean.) It is perhaps

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useful to acknowledge here that the scholarship on the cultural history of the Western Mediterranean has been substantially richer than that devoted to the Eastern domains. The surviving written sources in the Latin West found their way readily into scholarly analyses; with regard to the Eastern Mediterranean, scholarship has been hindered by such factors as linguistic discontinuities and national politics.

This volume draws attention to the dominance of national perspectives in much of modern historical writing. Scholarly analyses of regional cultural history, for instance, have strongly focused on cultural particularities rather than on common heritages or inter-cultural continuities. Even when a critical stance is taken *vis-à-vis* the constructed nature of the nation-building processes, focus has usually been on the cultural histories of particular 'national' or 'ethnic' groups. In the case of the Eastern Mediterranean, the history of cultural research in Greece looked only to the Greek experience, the Slavs foregrounded the search for Slavic identity; the Turks, for a Turkish one.[1] Peter Burke's seminal book *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (1978) has been a breakthrough in transcending such national boundaries and bringing to light the interactions among different European 'national cultures'.

The Mediterranean

As a host to major civilizations, the Mediterranean region has long invited historiographic attention, which is clear for example in the work of Henri Pirenne (1862–1935), Mikhail Rostovtzeff (1870–1952), Shelomo Dov Goiten (1900–85), and Fernand Braudel (1902–85).[2] To Paul Valéry, it was a 'machine à faire de la civilisation'.[3] Goffredo Plastino approached it from the Derridian concept of *différance*, arguing that the region has also been a '"machine" producing differences and conflicts along ever-changing borders'.[4] Mediterranean studies have thus adopted different models, looking for commonalities, or for conflicts, or for movement of populations. Commonalities are usually looked

[1] Herzfeld, *Ours Once More*; Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule*; Öztürkmen, *Türkiye'de Folklor ve Milliyetçilik*.

[2] See Pirenne, *Mohammed and Charlemagne*; Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World*; Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*; Goiten, *A Mediterranean Society*; and Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le Monde Méditerranéen*.

[3] Valéry, *Regards sur le monde actuel et autres essays*, p. 284.

[4] Plastino, 'Open Textures', p. 189.

for in such artistic realms as architecture, or in gender role distribution. The so-called 'romantic approach' foregrounded the Mediterranean as a mosaic of cultures, imagining a unity, a 'mediterraneanness' as a cultural category. Tracing hybridities in cultural forms, it has sought for connections in such areas as social life, religion, and in gender display. Thus, along this line of thought, the Mediterranean has offered similarities in its market place and piazza traditions, and in its displays of oral forms of performance such as rituals of conversation, meal-centred sociability, pilgrimages, sacred music, and lament.

However, in *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*, P. Horden and N. Purcell argue that the Mediterranean has offered a particular geographical structure which in fact made civilizations develop and then collapse: 'The distinctiveness of Mediterranean history', they state, 'results from the paradoxical coexistence of a milieu of relatively easy seaborne communications with a quite unusually fragmented topographies of microregions in the sea's coastlands and islands'.[5] The conflict-centred approach, by contrast, has obviously been grounded in the domain of politics and has focused mainly on class or ethnic/religious issues. (The work of David Jacoby and Benjamin Arbel explores such complexities, for instance, in intercultural networks of the Eastern Mediterranean.)[6] Study of the Mediterranean has also been problematic in the sense that it touches upon fundamental issues of modern regionalisms that continue to dominate in research and thought. National discourses bearing on the Mediterranean have usually been constructed based on national cultural policies.

Our approach to the region of Eastern Mediterranean is informed by these new (and old) debates on how best to approach the Mediterranean as a unit of study. The analysis of the political and economic dynamics in the Mediterranean also received substantial attention in the historiographic approach to the region — particularly in the grand narratives of the nineteenth century. The disciplines of philology, archaeology, and art history have also taken a lead in analysing the cultural exchanges in the region; archaeology is indeed perhaps one of the very few disciplines where the concept of 'Eastern Mediterranean' emerges as a significant unit of analysis.

The Eastern Mediterranean has also emerged as an important theme in the writings of some major literary figures. The books of Amin Maalouf, Nagip

[5] Horden, and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, p. 5.

[6] See Jacoby, *Recherches sur la Méditerranée orientale du XII^e au XV^e siècle*; Jacoby, *Studies on the Crusader States*; Jacoby, *Latins, Greeks and Muslims*; and Jacoby, *Commercial Exchange Across the Mediterranean*. See also Arbel, ed., *Intercultural Contacts in the Medieval Mediterranean*.

Mahfouz, and now Orhan Pamuk, definitely portray a cultural world that we can call the Eastern Mediterranean. Except, however, in the domain of ethnomusicology, performance is rarely focused on as a topic. Performance is, then, a neglected theme in study of the Mediterranean. In exploration of medieval and early modern cultural forms of the region, traces of interaction and continuities are, to be sure, unavoidable — though we do well to be cautious of the romantic approach, since ruptures, discrepancies, tensions, and complexities are also part of this historical-geographical context. A focus on performance is indeed one of the best approaches for helping us decode these complexities — as can be seen in the studies brought forward in this volume.

As will be clear in this volume, an assessment of the diverse types of performers and performances in the Eastern Mediterranean in the medieval and early modern era shows the complex and often circulatory modalities of exchange in the region. With extensive movement of populations, but also strongly kept local traditions, memory in the Mediterranean is layered in many ways. The fact that a performance survived as a ritual or was preserved in an archived form is certainly a proof of how powerful that particular cultural form was in its own time, giving us also clues about the socio-political context that preserved it. Therefore, while the theme of 'performance' as such has had a marginal status in social history, it certainly deserves as much attention as economic and political expressions in history.

Performance

We turn now to definitions of performance. This volume's approach to performance follows primarily the theoretical framework developed in folklore studies, taking artistic communicative processes as its centre.[7] By gathering a range of different performances of premodern times, namely between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries, it covers a wide range of historical moments, from the Crusader period to the early modern Ottoman era — and indeed at some points beyond, into modern times. A folklore-centred approach to performance was adopted in the hope of decoding the historical ethnographies that each of our case studies brought forward. Here, the concept of performance is used in its broad senses, ranging from verbal art to cultural performances.

7 Richard Bauman defines performance as a 'special, artful mode of communication, whose essence lies in the assumption of accountability to an audience for a display of communicative competence'. See Bauman, 'American Folklore Studies and Social Transformation', p. 177.

Although narrative constructions and storytelling are central to the concept of 'performance', in its modern usage performance usually refers to theatre and theatricality; the genres of dance, drama, and musical concerts are typically treated as separate domains. In its folkloric use, however, performance refers to a wider domain of phenomena and analysis, best expressed in the corpus of works along the lines of *New Perspectives to Folklore* movement.[8]

Approaching social life as 'communicatively constituted, produced, and reproduced by communicative practice', Richard Bauman explores the poetics of language in its social use — an ethnographic approach that values performativity as much as the text.[9] The verbal art of performance thus offers a valuable key to historians in imagining the social contexts in which surviving texts such as hagiographies, epics, or laments were all once 'performed'. Bauman also calls attention to the display aspect of performance: he discusses performance as enactment, defining cultural performances as *scheduled, temporally* and *spatially bounded, programmed, coordinated public* occasions, open to view by an audience and collective participation.[10]

The essays in this volume include such genres as songs of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Ottoman tradition, dances from different parts of Turkey and Armenia, Karagöz shadow puppets, many kinds of tales, and a wide range of festive performances. Both the secular and the sacred — Sunni, Shiite, Sufi, Alevi, Jewish, and Christians of several types — receive representation, as do many blends of the sacred and the profane. Evidence for performers and performance comes from architectural and manuscript images, historical accounts, literary works, and musical notation. Manuscripts now preserved in museums, archives, and libraries are of course major sources. Historical records of oral traditions, manuscripts, whether folkloric, religious, or political (as in the case of court records), offer important clues about past performances. In addition to the grand volumes in elite royal and aristocratic libraries, there also exist many humbler collections that contain musical notation, folksongs and folktales, images and religious rituals.

[8] See Bauman and Paredes, eds, *Toward New Perspectives in Folklore*. For the distinction between 'verbal art as performance' and 'cultural performances', see Bauman, 'American Folklore Studies and Social Transformation'; and Stoeltje and Bauman, 'The Semiotics of Cultural Performance'.

[9] Bauman, 'American Folklore Studies and Social Transformation', p. 177.

[10] Bauman 'Performance', p. 46.

Medieval and Early Modern Performance in the Eastern Mediterranean

Our volume adopts a somewhat latitudinarian understanding of the words 'performer' and 'performance', informed however by folklore studies. Emphasis generally falls on voiced, embodied presentations, and on celebrations of a public nature. To be more precise, this book approaches the issue both as 'verbal art as performance' and 'performance as enactment'.[11] It tries to transcend the linguistic and literary traditions which have tended to focus narrowly on the text, and follows more closely the approach adopted by ethnographers of storytelling, who have looked deeply at the social use of language in the context of social life. In Richard Bauman's terms, this is 'verbal art as performance', where performance has been a 'special, artful mode of communication', its essence lying 'in the accountability to an audience for a display of communicative competence, which is subject to evaluation for the skill and effectiveness with which the act of expression has been accomplished'.[12]

In assembling the wide range of performers and performances, we have organized this volume in five parts: Verbal Art as Performance, Performance Under Imperial Realms, Modes and Varieties of Entertainment, Iconography, and Ritual Roots of Performance.

Verbal Art as Performance

Seven papers focus primarily on the performance of literature — or let us say, more prudently, of works of verbal eloquence. Indeed, a few papers emphasize the performance of works that are most often thought of today as purely 'literary': as existing in books, and as intended only for silent readers. Although virtually nowhere in the places and periods under consideration was there any official 'theatre', these essays show that drama and theatricality were everywhere, making it possible for readers to imagine these literary works as performed.

We open our volume with an essay by **Metin And**, the pioneer of performance studies in the Ottoman world, who early on developed an approach for examining the Eastern Mediterranean in its interactions and complexities. He sent in a contribution to this volume shortly before he passed away in October 2008. In his essay, 'Storytelling as Performance', Metin And analyses

[11] See Bauman, 'American Folklore Studies and Social Transformation'; and Stoeltje and Bauman, 'The Semiotics of Cultural Performance'.

[12] Bauman, 'American Folklore Studies and Social Transformation', p. 177.

the dramatic storytelling tradition of *meddah* or *maqama* in a comparativist way, basing himself on primary surviving texts and travellers' accounts. Looking at Arabic, Persian, and Turkish traditions, he shows how the dramatic aspects of storytelling sessions also shaped the narratives. And also provides a review of different types of storytellers and their distinct style and repertoire, which included popular romances, national legends, epic tales of individual exploits, and religious narratives. The dramatic essence of this storytelling tradition is also raised in **Revital Yeffet-Refael**'s essay 'The *Maqama* — Between a Tale and a One-Man Show: In Search of its Form of Performance'. Focusing in particular on the *Book of Tahkemoni* by Judah Alharizi, a thirteenth-century Spanish Jew (who died in 1225 in Syria), writing *maqama* in Hebrew, Yeffet-Refael shows how the tales of Judah Alharizi invite a theatrical performance in the genre of *maqama*. As part of a larger literary-dramatic domain, Yeffet-Refael situates the *Book of Tahkemoni* within the Persian-Arabic medieval literary tradition, ranging from the *Maqamat* of Badi'azzaman al-Hamadhani to the *Arabian Nights*. In her essay 'On Orality, Text, and Performance in the *Book of Dede Korkut*', **Arzu Öztürkmen** analyses yet another genre, that of minstrel story-telling, as performed among the Turkic tribes that migrated from Central Asia to Anatolia. Her essay explores the signs of orality and performance embedded in the *Book of Dede Korkut*, a text illustrating the chaotic milieu of late medieval Anatolia, where the literary genres of epic, hagiography, and chronicle mutually influenced each another.

Four essays focus particularly on the performative power of religious storytelling. In 'Signals of Performability in the Croatian Glagolitic "Legend of St John Chrysostom"', **Marija-Ana Dürrigl** focuses on what the French call the *réalisation* of narrative works, through strong performance. She discusses the many performance features present in a remarkable and disturbing late medieval story: it tells of John, a saintly hermit, who falls into deadly sin, raping and killing a young girl; after many years as a wild man without the ability to speak, he is brought to the court of the king; he dramatically repents, and regains the power of speech; the maiden — who was the king's daughter — is miraculously raised from the dead, none the worse for her years under the ground. Those who read the story aloud — and, especially, professional storytellers who recited the tale — would clearly have dramatized this memorable and amazing narrative through voice and gesture. **Michael Curschmann**'s 'The Performance of Joinville's *Credo*' shows how literary works can sometimes raise surprising performance issues. As Curschmann argues, this Catholic creed, written in the thirteenth century in the Holy Land by Joinville, a layman and crusader with King Louis IX of France, may have been both written out and illustrated on

the back of liturgical folios. It was probably intended to be read aloud, and the miniatures shown, to knights as they lay on their deathbed. **David Rotman**'s 'Medieval Folktales, Modern Problems, and a Gifted Preacher: The Case of Rabbi Joseph Hayyim and the "Tale of a Fox that Left his Heart at Home"' focuses attention on the sermons of a famous nineteenth-century rabbi, which often lasted up to three hours. Rabbi Yosef told memorable exemplary stories many of which dated back to the medieval period. Rotman also discusses how the rabbi interacted with his audience, asking questions and providing answers to these exemplary tales. In '"The Seven Sleepers of Ephesus": Can We Reawaken Performance of this Hagiographical Folktale?', **Evelyn Birge Vitz**, focuses on a famous tale that travelled around Europe and the Middle East for over a thousand years. Discussing four texts — including the Qur'an — Vitz shows how different versions of the same story called up different emotions or passions, and clearly varied in their performance mode.

Performance under Imperial Realms

Six essays are concerned with the political context of cultural performances. These papers focus on the ways in which the Byzantine and Ottoman worlds conceived of themselves, their ceremonies, and indeed their identity. While verbal art as performance usually takes place in the face-to-face context of a narrative event, cultural performances such as festivals, drama, and fairs are produced in the public sphere. As Richard Bauman and Beverly Stoeltje put it, cultural performances are public enactments in which a culture is 'encapsulated, enacted, placed on display for itself and for outsiders', and which offer heightened symbolic events and experiences with intensified collective meanings and values.[13] Performances in imperial contexts can therefore take different artistic forms and can be embodied by diverse groups of performers, while many performances can also have a religious dimension. These performances are usually described from within by those who belong to the culture, but also sometimes by travellers who may offer very different reactions to these performances. And it is important to recognize that performance in imperial times was not always glorious, but also included performances by outcasts such as slaves and prisoners and by marginalized groups.

Three essays focus on performance in the Byzantine Empire. In 'How to Entertain the Byzantines? Some Remarks on Mimes and Jesters in Byzantium' **Przemysław Marciniak** shows that, although medieval Byzantium did not

[13] Stoeltje and Bauman, 'The Semiotics of Cultural Performance', p. 589.

have any theatre as such, the imperial court was itself strongly theatrical in nature, functioning as a highly dramatized centre. It has traditionally been said that Byzantium was poor in theatre and theatricality — but it is clear that the Byzantine world knew and enjoyed many theatrical forms, including performances by mimes and jesters. Marciniak emphasizes 'theatralized communication' in Byzantium, especially under the Komnenian rule. The contribution by **Tivadar Palagyi** can serve to introduce the hostility — typically mixed with ambivalence — of secular and religious authorities towards popular performers throughout the period and the regions under consideration (and indeed beyond). 'Between Admiration, Anxiety, and Anger: Views on Mimes and Performers in the Byzantine World' examines the largely critical attitudes towards popular performers in Byzantium. (The same official attitudes exist, *mutatis mutandis*, throughout Christendom and in Islamic lands as well.) Religious and imperial officials often condemned mimes and other entertainers for their mockery and their impiety in word and gesture — but performers of all sorts were nonetheless omnipresent and widely appreciated, even at court. Indeed, official appreciation and tolerance of them grew in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries. Palagyi's essay also touches upon Byzantine princess Anna Comnena's diaries, offering evidence for early theatrical performances by the Turkic tribes who settled in Anatolia. The perception of 'the other' is also raised in **Koray Durak**'s essay on 'Performance and Ideology in the Exchange of Prisoners between the Byzantines and the Islamic Near Easterners in the Early Middle Ages'. Durak emphasizes the strongly theatrical manner in the ways in which prisoners were exchanged between Muslims and Byzantines in the early Middle Ages. Ritual actions helped both sides present the desired image to the other and to themselves.

Medieval and early modern cultural performances in the eastern Mediterranean also included imperial festivals and community entertainments. The imperial festivals embodied a broad range of genres, including poetry recitation, dramatized guild parades, dances, and acrobatics. Two essays reflect upon the carnival spirit of Ottoman festivals. In 'Fireworks in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul', **Suraiya Faroqhi** draws on Ottoman and European sources, giving us a glimpse of the Ottoman fascination with fireworks displays. As the high point of the festivals, fireworks could be shared with the population at large, thus legitimizing princely rule by transcending the barriers of status and wealth. **Özdemir Nutku** analyses the many functions that clowns filled in these festivals; these included providing security, performing dances that were grotesque parodies of elegant dancing, and acting as buffoons.

The class dimensions of the imperial social life are examined by two essays which focus on different types of slavery under the Ottoman Empire. The contribution by **Danielle Haase-Dubosc**, 'Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689–1762): Her Turkish Performances', discusses a British lady's narrative discourse with a particular focus on her fascination with the Turkish world of the harem. Haase-Dubosc shows how various aspects of Ottoman culture influenced Lady Montagu, including the practice of smallpox inoculation. The essay also reveals that the corpus of letters that constituted the narrative of Lady Montagu was indeed a performance in itself, a performative representation of her life among the Ottomans. In his essay 'The Fusion of Zar-Bori and Sufi Zikr as Performance: Enslaved Africans in the Ottoman Empire', **Ehud R. Toledano** deals with a different sort of performance among Ottoman slaves — the *zar* religious cult, where the leading role was often played by a woman. Toledano shows how slaves from various parts of Africa brought with them religious beliefs which they continued to perform and enact in their new milieus, interacting as well with Circassian and other slaves in the Ottoman world. These ceremonies provoked much fascination as well as concern by disapproving Ottoman authorities.

Modes and Varieties of Entertainment

Cultural performances of medieval and early modern times were not always linked to stately performances. At the social level, different modes of entertainment coexisted under a wide range of forms of entertainment. Our volume takes up such varied settings as coffee houses and weddings, and genres such as puppet theatre, dances, and songs; it highlights interactions between moving populations and local performers, looking at particular ways in which urban, rural, island-bound, and moving populations constructed and lived their performances.

Cemal Kafadar's essay is titled 'How Dark is the History of the Night, How Black the Story of Coffee, How Bitter the Tale of Love: The Changing Measure of Leisure and Pleasure in Early Modern Istanbul'. Using primary sources on coffee and coffeehouses, Kafadar draws attention to the general political dynamic of early modern Ottoman times, pointing to a social-cultural domain where the public and private consumption of coffee eventually produced and consolidated its own cultural forms. Showing how leisure, night-time, artificial lighting, and the consumption of drinks such as coffee, alcohol, and *boza* (malted millet) were interrelated, Kafadar situates his historical ethnography within the urban frame of Ottoman cities like Istanbul and Cairo, where a new social class emerged to engage in such leisure activities. In these new public settings, Kafadar argues, tra-

ditional performance genres such as *meddah* (storytelling) and *karagöz* shadow theatre soon took on highly structured forms; Kafadar's analysis also points to heightened performance moments in the Ottoman context, such as Ramadan, holy nights, military victories, and the births of princes and princesses. All this can serve as a reminder of the inclusiveness of the leisure pastimes that in so many festive events transcend ethnic and religious boundaries.

Karagöz or shadow theatre — one of the most fundamental forms of Ottoman humour — is represented in this volume by two essays. Both **Daryo Mizrahi** and **Mas'ud Hamdan** underline how *karagöz* highlights popular taste, where sexual licence finds free expression, and where absurdity and sarcasm give voice to social and political criticism. **Mizrahi**, basing himself on travellers' accounts, argues that the inhabitants of Ottoman Istanbul used *karagöz* as a 'structural exercise' where they could play with the rules and conventions guiding everyday life. **Hamdan**, using the oldest surviving *karagöz* plays and then shifting the setting back to medieval Egypt, offers a textual analysis of three *karagöz* stories, concluding that they functioned 'as an open window to life, albeit with an inverted view'. Hamdan also draws attention to the close resemblance between *karagöz* and other Arabic dialogistic genres, providing an important element of intertextuality, which this volume wishes to emphasize.

A number of essays focus on entertainment forms among different ethnic and regional groups. In 'Armenian Traditional Music and the Performance Practices in the Armenian Community of Jerusalem', **Noune Zeltsburg-Poghosyan** leads us towards a very important aspect of Armenian culture — its complexly woven musical tradition. She discusses connections between written and oral practices and the interplay between profane-folk and liturgical musical traditions. Zeltzburg-Poghosian also underlines interesting particularities within Armenian culture — an important point in our discussion of continuities and ruptures in medieval and early modern communities. Thus, it is interesting to note that, on the one hand, Armenian communities that were geographically separated developed different musical practices and, on the other hand, Armenian communities often shared wedding (and other) traditions with other ethnic and religious communities. All this provides an interesting refutation to strongly ethnic or nationalistic discourses.

Two contributions highlight cultural forms of displaced communities. **Judith Cohen**'s 'Constructing the Performed Identity of Sephardic Songs' illustrates the diversity within medieval Jewish music tradition. Giving an overview of genres and performance practices of Sephardic (Judeo-Spanish) songs, Cohen discusses a wide range of locales where these songs thrived and travelled, from Spain to Morocco to Ottoman lands — to Canada. Among the

genres she discusses are calendar and life-cycle songs — from birth to romance, from marriage to death; she takes up religious songs and the instruments that sometimes accompanied the singing. Cohen also reminds us that Sephardic songs borrowed heavily from the various vernacular cultures to which singers were exposed. **Elena Marushiakova** and **Veselin Popov**'s contribution, 'Gypsy Musicians and Performances in the Ottoman Empire on the Balkans', examines the performances of another migrating culture. Their work illustrates how the Gypsy (or Romani) cultural heritage flourished by interacting with the local cultures of the Balkans. Travellers' accounts, as well as tax records, special laws, and guilds and court documents from the Ottoman archives all call attention to the particularities of Gypsy folklore as it travelled throughout south-eastern Europe. The authors focus particular attention on the art of Gypsy musicians — especially on their musical theatrical performances and their puppet shows.

Iconography

Three essays make extensive use of visual sources in their methodology; all look at the ways in which images and objects capture, often in symbolic fashion, real or imagined performances. Reading images as visual sources, these authors show how imagery can function in a particular culture — and we can see that images present a different sort of challenge from verbal narratives. While some images are essentially private, others are clearly intended for impressive display.

Viktoria Kepetzi follows up on the lack of official theatre in Byzantium, but also on the presence of a powerful theatricality: in 'Scenes of Performers in Byzantine Art, Iconography, Social and Cultural Milieu: The Case of Acrobats', she focuses on the presence and the provocative images of acrobats in Byzantine art. In 'Theatricality of Byzantine Images: Some Preliminary Thoughts' **Anestis Vasilakeris** shows that religious images are often given strong theatrical framing in Byzantine icons, with an interesting scenic structure, particularly favoured by thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Byzantine painters. The viewer is invited to observe and participate in the scene as an involved spectator.

In 'Theatrical Features in Armenian Manuscripts', **Emma Petrosyan** and **Hrant Khachikyan** introduce the rich tradition of performance-focused ornamentation in medieval and early modern Armenian manuscripts. While Petrosyan focuses on the theatrical images of these manuscripts, Khachikyan offers an assessment of the representation of musicians and musical instruments in the manuscript capital initial letters. Armenian miniatures, which depict many rituals, theatrical performances, and musical practices, deserve more attention from the international scholarly community working on performance.

In 'Glorious Noise of Empire', **Gabriela Currie** looks at the narrative accounts of musical performances in Byzantine and Ottoman imperial courts in the medieval and early modern era. She is particularly interested in shifts of power, represented in part by changes in instruments, in particular from the dominance of the Byzantine organ to that of the Ottoman pipe and drum. She also examines the ways in which images and objects of various kinds capture in symbolic ways these glorious imperial sounds in their shifting historical settings.

Ritual Roots of Performance

Our search for performance in the Eastern Mediterranean during the medieval and early modern era brought us to sources showing their survival in modern times as well. Performances are evanescent, but the ethnographic survey of today's rituals can sometimes recapture elements surviving from a past era. Many performances that still take place today have ancient roots, going back to Ottoman times or even earlier. These performances have been extremely important for the identity of the peoples who have continued to perform them for centuries. As ethnographic residues of earlier performances, they are important historical documents in their own right. While some of the strongly ritual elements may drop out in time, many performances retain structural residue and continue to survive as bearers of a cultural tradition.

Three contributions focus on the ritual roots of festive performance in different settings of the Eastern Mediterranean. These essays give us insights into the ways in which rituals can operate as historical documents, through ethnographic analysis. **Samia Mehrez**'s essay, titled 'Representing the Moulid: Salah Jahin's *Al-Layla al-Kabira* between Populist and Nationalist Aspirations', bears on the Egyptian *mulid* (saints' birthday) celebrations. She shows how the conspicuous display and consumption elements of the festive order are interwoven with Islamic and Coptic saints' birthdays; the profane blends with the religious. Mehrez also shows the new meanings assigned to this historical festive memory in its 'staged ritual' form in modern times, In 'Performative Conceptions of Social Change: The Case of *Nevruz* Celebrations in Pre-Ottoman and Ottoman Anatolia', **Yücel Demirer**'s analyses *nevruz* celebrations — spring rites rooted in Central Asian, pre-Islamic traditions. Demirer brings up yet another example of how ancient forms can take on new meanings, and shows how the historically layered and geographically diversified form of the spring rite reproduces a variety of folk beliefs. This historical festive memory also has important political implications today: the legacy of *nevruz* in modern Turkey is a problematic issue between the Kurdish population and the secular Turkish state.

We can see yet another example of where ancient religious practices take on new meanings in the religious rituals of the Alevi communities of Asia Minor. The Alevi suffered from the political and religious struggles between the Sunni Ottoman Empire and the Shi'i Safavids, starting in the sixteenth century. In her essay, 'Alevi Ritual Movement: Its Representation in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Texts and Today', **Fahriye Dinçer** shows how Alevi religious rituals — which are rooted in part in Shamanism and Sufiism — have functioned as the most significant mechanism for the maintenance of the community. The performances of the rituals, in their staged form, in modern times, has taken on protest dimensions *vis-à-vis* the Turkish state.

Elsie Ivancich-Dunin's essay, 'The Moreška Dance/Drama on the Island of Korčula (Croatia): A Turkish Connection?', offers another glimpse of European folklore, where 'otherification' processes usually centre on the Turks. Focusing on a combat dance between Moors and Turks performed in Korčula, a small Croatian town, Ivancich-Dunin explores the historical process by which this particular dance has been performed and shows how it relates to the town's particular socio-cultural history and transformations. She also shows how learning the intricate and highly dangerous moves of the sword dance, has contributed to a living, ongoing continuity between the generations within the town.

Cem Behar's contribution, 'The Show and the Ritual: The Mevlevi *Mukabele* in Ottoman Times', touches upon the distinction that dance scholars typically make between ritual movement systems and dance performances. The *mukabele* (also known as *sema*) ceremony among Mevlevi dervishes (followers of Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi) both introduces and abolishes this distinction: Behar shows that Mevlevi lodges used their own rituals as staged performances, inviting in the outside world.

Zhenya Khachatryan's 'The Ritual of Vardan Mamikonyan' shows how the memory of a fifth-century battle between Armenian and Persian armies survived — and still survives today — in commemorative performances held in various regions of Armenia. Named for the conquering hero Vartan Mamikonyan, the spectacles focus primarily on re-enactment of the soldiers' victory procession, accompanied with music and dances that display many elements of the medieval *carnivalesque*.

Performance-Centred Historical Research: Epilogue

In his essay entitled 'The Performative Turn in Recent Cultural History', **Peter Burke** provides a critical analysis of the impact that performance studies has had on historical writing. Recent scholarship shows that historians have benefited from the rise of performance-centred approaches, using ritual, narrative, and other aspects of everyday life to explain past events, social lives, and political structures. In the use of performance approaches in historical research, however, historians find themselves in a more difficult situation than anthropologists, since the sources available to historians are typically limited. As Burke points out, the question becomes whether, and to what degree, today's 'postmodern performative turn' in historical writing can 'illuminate the culture of earlier periods'. Burke notes that 'festivals may be regarded as "performances of memory"' — many essays in this volume certainly illustrate this — but he cautions against an overly-broad performance studies approach to the interpretation of artistic and social domains of everyday life. Burke recommends that, as they look at historical cultural forms, historians be prudent — sensitive to different styles of performing, such as 'stylized, expressive, or spectacular', and to their associations with 'different regions, social groups and, not least, different periods'.

Burke also notes the marginal professional status accorded to most historians who study cultural forms such as music, drama, and dance. One of the primary purposes of this volume is precisely to emphasize the important scholarly contributions of cultural historians. The phenomena they study should not be viewed as merely secondary or minor aspects of past societies — but rather as fundamental components of the deep structures of these societies.

Orality, Text, and Performance in the *Book of Dede Korkut*

Arzu Öztürkmen

Surviving manuscripts written in Turkish in medieval Anatolia (Asia Minor) are not abundant. A brief overview of the cultural-historical milieu of Anatolia shows that the region lacked strong political unity during the late medieval period, as the Byzantine Empire weakened and was challenged by the rising power of incoming Turkic tribes, which had converted to Islam. This was a rather fluid cultural domain, where spoken languages, scripts, and belief systems were exposed to and borrowed elements from one another. Whether storytelling collections, hagiographies, or chronicles, these manuscripts shared linguistic, stylistic, and discursive commonalities, while, however, fulfilling different functions for different audiences.[1] In addition to the early chronicles on Ottoman history and a series of epic hagiographies, the *Book of Dede Korkut* comprises part of this limited repertoire of surviving texts written in Turkish. This essay aims to examine the performative aspects of this unique piece of verbal art, which reflects the language and social life of a nomadic tribal community with Central Asian origins and was led by their tribal leader known as *Dede* ('Grandfather') or *Ata* ('Father'). It is highly probable that the epic tales of the *Book of Dede Korkut* were committed to writing when the chief storytellers of the nomadic communities had aged and passed away. The *Book of Dede Korkut*

[1] See for example, Pamukçiyan, 'Ermeni Harfli El Yazması Eski Bir Cönk 1'; Kut, 'Ermeni Harfleriyle Basılmış Türkçe Destanlar'; Tekin, 'Çeşitli Alfabelerle Türkçe Yazılar'; Dedes, *The Battalname*; Akışık, 'The Akritai and Frontier Ethos'; Durak, 'Byzantine-Turkish Encounter'; and Bayrı, 'Centre-Periphery, Orthodoxy-Heterodoxy'.

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is, in this sense, a memory book for the new settlers to preserve the stories of their remote homelands, a source for the new generations born in Anatolia.

The *Book of Dede Korkut* is a collection of twelve stories, all narrated by the persona of Dede Korkut, the chief of a Turkic Oghuz tribe. The manuscript was first discovered by V. Diez in 1815 in the Royal Library of Dresden. This initial discovery was then followed by the discovery of a second manuscript containing only six stories, found in 1950 in the Vatican Library by Italian Orientalist Ettore Rossi. According to Geoffrey Lewis, who translated the manuscript into English in 1974, the two manuscripts were not copies from a single original, as there are great divergences between the two. Lewis explains, 'This is precisely what one would expect if a cycle of stories that had long been transmitted orally with much time-honored phraseology but also with variations introduced by different narrators, happened to be twice recorded in writing'.[2]

Based upon a reference to Akkoyunlu ruler Uzun Hasan (r. 1453–78) in the text, Turkish folklorist Pertev Naili Boratav has dated the manuscript to the late fifteenth century, while Geoffrey Lewis concluded that the date of compilation could be fairly early in the fifteenth century. Concerning the literary tradition to which the Dede Korkut narratives belongs, Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı places them at the beginning of a series of literary texts, including the *Battalname* and the *Danişmendname*, which reflect the encounters of newly Islamized communities with the settled Christian communities of Asia Minor.[3]

The written text of the *Book of Dede Korkut* includes several indications of orality and references to oral performances. The most explicit sign is perhaps the fact that many of the stories begin by reintroducing the main characters to the audience before continuing to the main story. Such repetition usually indicates that the individual stories were recited separately, most probably during different storytelling sessions. In other words, every story in the manuscript seems to be the outcome of a separate 'narrative event'.[4]

[2] See *The Book of Dede Korkut*, trans. by Lewis, pp. 19–20.

[3] See Gölpınarlı, ed., *Vilâyet-nâme*. This essay will leave aside the *Battalname* and *Danişmendname* genres. But for a detailed analysis of these texts one can refer to *Battalname*, ed. by Dedes; and *La geste de Melik Danişmend*, ed. by Mélikoff.

[4] In his study of oral narratives and performances, Richard Bauman underlines the different layers in oral storytelling, distinguishing between 'narrated events' (the events recounted in the narratives) versus 'narrative events' (the situations in which the narratives are told). See Bauman, *Story, Performance, and Event*.

Orhan Şaik Gökyay, who re-evaluated the manuscript in 1976, praises the language of the text as one 'having no useless literary embellishment' — his remark is typical of Republican Turkish criticism of the flowery style of Ottoman court literature.[5] Although the text of the *Book of Dede Korkut* consists mainly of prose narrative, it includes numerous rhyming elements called *soylamas*, which G. Lewis defines as 'rhythmic, alliterative, and assonant or rhyming passages'.[6] The fact that the text itself refers to musical performances suggests that these *soylamas* could have been both sung and recited. According to Gökyay, the *soylamas* also marked shifts in emotional tone within the narrative. The fact that the prose gives way to poetry in the *soylamas* is interpreted by Gökyay as an instance of 'the pouring out of excess excitement'.[7]

The *Book of Dede Korkut* reveals further techniques of oral storytelling. The narrator, ostensibly Dede Korkut himself, often interrupts his story with an address to his ruler: *Hanım* (My Khan) or *Sultanım* (My Sultan). This break in the narrative seems to acknowledge the presence of the ruler as an audience member, and usually occurs when there is a need to increase the level of excitement, as in '[...] When he said so, my Khan, twenty more unmanly scoundrels appeared! [...]'.[8] At times, the address creates anticipation for the continuation of the story: 'Following this, my Khan, let us see who came next!'[9] In the flow of an oral storytelling session, questions also are utilized as a technique to create excitement and to animate the text: 'Away went Bamsı Beyrek after one of them. He chased it to a place and what do you think they saw? My Sultan, they saw a red tent pitched on the green grass.'[10]

The language of the *Book of Dede Korkut* includes numerous words from the dialects of diverse migrant Turkic communities: Azeri, Kipchak, and Mongolian. The text also reflects colloquial usage including elements of daily conversation, such as greetings and proverbial expressions, among which 'I send

5 See *Dêde Korkut hikâyeleri*, ed. by Gökyay. For a critique of Ottoman *Divan* tradition see Holbrook, *The Unreadable Shores of Love*.

6 *The Book of Dede Korkut*, trans. by Lewis, pp. 19–20.

7 See *Dede Korkut hikâyeleri*, ed. by Gökyay, p. 14.

8 *Dede Korkut hikâyeleri*, ed. by Gökyay, p. 35: 'Böyle deyince Hanım, o namertlerin yirmisi daha çıka geldi.'

9 *Dede Korkut hikâyeleri*, ed. by Gökyay, pp. 52–53: 'Bunun ardınca hanım, görelim kimler yetişti?'

10 *Dede Korkut hikâyeleri*, ed. by Gökyay, p. 58: 'Bamsı Beyrek birinin ardından kovarak gitti. Kovarken bir yere geldi. Ne gördü? Gördi ki Sultanım, gök çayırın üzerine bir kırmızı otak dikilmiş.'

you God's blessings'[11] and 'You the Infidel, there is no doubt of God's uniqueness'[12] occur frequently. There are curses such as 'You, the son of the one who went astray',[13] and much longer formulaic compositions to end the stories, in the form of prayers:

> May your native mountains never fall down! May your shade tree never be cut down! May your white-bearded father's place be flying in the skies! May your white-haired mother's place be in the heavens! May the son never break with his brother! May those who pray now with me see God's face! May God collect and correct your sins and forgive them in the name of the renowned [Prophet] Muhammet Mustafa![14]

Another important sign of oral performance is the considerable number of dialogues that occur in the stories narrated in the *Book of Dede Korkut*. The story of the plundering of Salur Kazan's home, for instance, utilizes dialogues between the main characters of different scenes in the story.[15] The story of Kam Büre's Son Bamsı Beyrek is replete with conversations among Bay Büre, his wife, his son Bamsı Beyrek, and Bamsı's lover Banıçiçek.[16]

Historian Fuad Köprülü was one of the first scholars to call attention to the heterodox cultural domain of late medieval Anatolia in which medieval texts like the *Book of Dede Korkut* were produced.[17] Köprülü highlights in particular the role of Turkish language in this culturally complex domain. There, he stated, Turkish had to compete with two other languages, Arabic and Persian, both used in the court circles of late medieval Anatolia. In pursuit of establishing a nationalist Republican paradigm, Köprülü did not of course mention any

11 *Dede Korkut hikâyeleri*, ed. by Gökyay, p. 61: 'Sizi Hakka ısmarladım.'

12 *Dede Korkut hikâyeleri*, ed. by Gökyay, p. 50: 'Bre Kafir aman, Tanrının birliğine yoktur güman.'

13 *Dede Korkut hikâyeleri*, ed. by Gökyay, p. 51, 'Kavatoğlu kavat'.

14 *Dede Korkut hikâyeleri*, ed. by Gökyay, p. 81: 'Yerli karadağların yıkılmasın! Gölgelice kaba ağacın kesilmesin! Aksakallı baban yeri uçmak olsun! Akpürçekli anan yeri Cennet olsun! Oğul ile kardaştan ayırmasın! Amin deyenler, Tanrının yüzünü görsün! Derlesin toplasın, günahlarınızı adı- görklü Muhammet Mustafa yüzü suyuna bağışlasın!'

15 See *Dede Korkut hikâyeleri*, ed. by Gökyay, pp. 42–43.

16 See *Dede Korkut hikâyeleri*, ed. by Gökyay, pp. 55–81. One should also mention that in the Republican literary approach, the *Book of Dede Korkut* has also been presented as a document which bears signs of Central Asian Turkic culture merging with the newly adopted Islamic belief. The relatively more visible and powerful place of women among the newly settled Turkic Oguz tribes has been praised in the Republican approach towards the Book of Dede Korkut.

17 See Köprülü, *The Origins of the Ottoman Empire*.

impact of Armenian and Greek culture. Köprülü also argues that the old Uygur alphabet was gradually replaced by the Arabic alphabet among the settling Turkic communities, dating the development of a written literature in Turkish to the thirteenth century. Although many late medieval texts are mentioned in Ottoman sources, few of these survived the warfare and migrations that characterized late medieval Anatolia. Köprülü states that this state of chaos was one reason why Sufism took root in Anatolia, drawing on the Ahmed Yesevi tradition founded in Turkistan.[18] To appeal to larger audiences, Sufi leaders who had long operated in a Persian milieu felt the need to adopt Turkish in their teaching. In addition to many other Turcophone Sufi shaykhs, we could mention the thirteenth-century Sufi poet Yunus Emre, whose hymns survive until the present day in the simple colloquial Turkish in which they were originally composed.[19]

The presence of the Sufi orders is no doubt of great importance in the analysis of orality and literacy in late medieval Anatolia. During this period, as different social and political institutions were taking shape, Islam was competing with Orthodox Christianity, and the various principalities were in constant negotiation with the social networks established through the religious orders. In *Between Two Worlds*, Cemal Kafadar observes that while the cultural life of the frontiers was clearly dominated by oral traditions, many *beys* in need of prestige and leverage in respect to the growing network of Sufi institutions commissioned the production of written works for the courts of their principalities.[20]

The study of oral performance in written manuscripts has several different dimensions. First and foremost, orality was the essence of the daily communicative processes in the medieval world. It was the dominant form of communication in all arenas, extending from economic transactions to social and artistic encounters. Therefore, a person's relation to a 'written text' and to those who produced and consumed it depended in critical ways on class, welfare, and gender. In the chaotic medieval Anatolian context, access to the written text had particular political meanings for different social communities such as the

18 Ahmed Yesevi was the influential Sufi leader in the twelfth century, whose teaching was composed in Turkish in poetry form and was put into writing in the fifteenth century as *Divan-ı Hikmet*. Yesevi's usage of Turkish language was very influential in spreading his teaching throughout Turkish speaking communities.

19 For an analysis of Yunus Emre's mysticism see Halman, ed., *Yunus Emre and his Mystical Poetry*.

20 See Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*.

religious orders or the courts of the ruling *beys*. A second dimension of exploring oral performances in written manuscripts concerns instances of oral performance mentioned in the text. Descriptions of storytelling sessions offer clues to the times and localities in which these narratives were performed. A third dimension involves the forms of colloquial language used in the written texts and its similarities to the language of other contemporaneous folkloric forms. And finally, the various possible uses of the written text — notably reading it aloud — present another instance in which the transition between orality and literacy takes a dialogic course.

One should therefore ask how written manuscripts were received in the predominantly oral culture of Anatolia, where the social understanding of and response to a written work are important factors to be discussed. To begin with, the relation to 'the book' in a Muslim society had its own significance. In his analysis of early Islamic education, Seyyed Hossein Nasr observes that oral transmission has always complemented the written text, as the spoken word made possible the full understanding and correct 'reading' of the written text.[21] In the case of the *Book of Dede Korkut*, it seems that the transition to a literate form was needed to preserve the memory of a long-shared oral tradition, and the manuscript itself served as the material repository of a cultural repertoire. The level of literacy in the communities where these texts were produced is, of course, another matter to consider. In her analysis of culture in Ottoman Egypt, Nelly Hanna draws attention to the constant interplay between written and oral cultures: 'Popular culture', Hanna insists, 'was not the realm of popular classes alone, and [...] learned culture was not the possession only of scholars and intellectuals.' The style and language of popular tales could be detected 'in

21 Nasr states: 'The oral tradition has affected the manner of reading and interpreting the written text, its teaching and transmission, and the role of certain texts and commentaries in the educational circles of the Islamic world [...]. It is even significant in the correct rereading of a particular manuscript and in the selection of manuscripts for establishing the text of a particular work. The spoken word is key to many enigmas concerning the continuity of certain teachings [...]. The oral tradition also provides a direct link between the student and a master who might have lived generations ago, enabling the student to study the teachings in question in depth [...]. The oral tradition transformed the written book from the definitive text which was the sole basis of the ideas to be understood to the gate to a whole living world for which the book became the point of departure [...]. The nexus between oral tradition and esoteric interpretation of gnostic and philosophical texts must not, however, detract from the outward meaning and diminish the role of oral tradition in enabling the written text to be read correctly, albeit outwardly [...]. In a sense the spoken word makes possible the full understanding and correct "reading" of the written text.' See Nasr, 'Oral Transmission and the Book in Islamic Education', pp. 65–66.

learned forms of writing such as history, and in the development of linguistic studies that stressed colloquial and dialect'.[22]

To conclude, it is important to call attention once again to the complexities of studying late medieval texts produced in Anatolia. This corpus of manuscripts consists of both literary and historical works. In most cases, the epic, hagiographical, and chronicle characteristics of the narratives merge with one another. Although these texts were written in Turkish, one should be aware of non-Turkish influences on them. Firstly, medieval Anatolia was a complex cultural domain, characterized by mobile populations, a wide variety of rulers, and various degrees of cultural assimilation, borrowing, and negotiation. Therefore, these late medieval texts must be compared with other epics, hagiographies, and chronicles produced in the eastern Mediterranean region. Regrettably, the comparative study of the culturally layered civilization of late medieval Anatolia has been neglected. Scholars ordinarily focus on one particular culture, overlooking contacts and borrowings among diverse cultural, religious, and lingual communities. Situated at the crossroads of the Caucasian, Aegean, and Mesopotamian cultural domains, Anatolia has always been multi-ethnic and multilingual. In the later Middle Ages, its population included not only Turkic but also Armenian, Greek, Kurdish, Arab, Assyrian, and Laz communities. Therefore, questions arise concerning the similarities and divergences of these Turkish texts with their non-Turkish counterparts, such as the Byzantine epic of Digenes Akritas, the Armenian Vardan Mamikonyan, or the Arab epic of the Bani Hilal.[23] The comparative perspective can also be extended to include medieval European texts, which have been the subject of much broader scholarship on the analysis of performance in literate forms.[24]

[22] Hanna, 'Culture in Ottoman Egypt', p. 100. On the similarity of cultural forms shared across class, one should also remember Mensuroğlu's statement that 'The existence of specimens of folk literature and simple religious-mystical works side by side with historical works and books written to appeal to the upper classes demonstrate that the aesthetic needs of every class of the community were satisfied by literary works in both verse and prose'. (p. 261)

[23] See respectively, Galatariotou, *The Making of a Saint*; Khachatryan, 'Vardan Mamikonyan Performance'; and Slyomovics, *The Merchant of Art*.

[24] See for example Vitz, *Orality and Performance in Early French Romance*; Vitz, Regalado, and Lawrence, eds, *Performing Medieval Narrative*; Menache, *The Vox Dei*; and Cardarelli and Richards, *Art and Identity*.

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